

# Remapping the rise of the European novel

*Edited by*

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VOLTAIRE FOUNDATION

OXFORD

2007

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© 2007 Voltaire Foundation, University of Oxford

ISBN 978 0 7294 0916 2  
ISSN 0435-2866

Voltaire Foundation  
99 Banbury Road  
Oxford OX2 6JX, UK

A catalogue record for this book  
is available from the British Library

The correct reference for this volume is  
*SVEC* 2007:10

This series is available on annual subscription

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This book is printed on acid-free paper  
Typeset and printed in Europe by the Alden Group, Oxfordshire

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MÓNICA BOLUFER

Poisonous plants or schools of virtue?  
The second 'rise' of the novel in  
eighteenth-century Spain<sup>1</sup>

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY Spain has long been regarded as occupying an exceptional position in the European story of the 'rise of the novel'. Literature written in Catalan and Castilian is acknowledged as having played a central role in the development of fictional prose narrative from the fifteenth-century chivalric romance, *Tirant lo Blanch*, and the picaresque novel, to Miguel de Cervantes' *Quixote* (1605; second part 1615). It is generally assumed, however, that from the end of the seventeenth century the novelistic tradition in Spain was in decline and that it did not revive until the nineteenth century. The absence of the novel in eighteenth-century Spain has been attributed to the severity of censorship and cultural control, and to the late formation of a modern reading public – all functions of the economic, social and cultural conditions of a country just emerging from its seventeenth-century decadence and in which many scholars have doubted that a proper Enlightenment ever took place.<sup>2</sup> According to José F. Montesinos, although the novel was a Spanish invention, the influence of the seventeenth-century literary style known as *conceptismo* (conceptism) and strict Catholic morality, enforced by the Inquisition, combined to stifle its development, making the eighteenth century a period without novels.<sup>3</sup> In a more nuanced way, Reginald Brown and Lucienne Domergue have suggested that the modern Spanish novel had a timid beginning in the 1780s only to be repressed in the 1790s and again under Ferdinand VII's absolutist regime between 1812 and 1820, and between 1823 and 1833: it would not flourish until the romantic period or, more precisely, from 1833, when a more liberal regime was finally established.<sup>4</sup>

1. I would like to thank Jenny Mander for her close reading and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

2. Luis M. Enciso Recio, 'La Ilustración española', in *Coloquio internacional Carlos III y su siglo* (Madrid, 1990), p.621-96.

3. Montesinos, *Introducción a una historia de la novela en España en el siglo XIX*, p.1-2.

4. Brown, *La Novela española: 1700-1850*, p.9; Lucienne Domergue, 'Ilustración y novela en la España de Carlos IV', in *Homenaje a José A. Maravall*, ed. Carmen Iglesias (Madrid, 1985), p.483-95; Lucienne Domergue, *La Censure de livres en Espagne à la fin de l'Ancien Régime* (Madrid, 1996).

A number of recent studies, however, influenced by Ian Watt's thesis on the rise of the British novel, have argued that eighteenth-century Spain did in fact experience a second 'rise' of the novel, albeit in a belated and often vicarious fashion.<sup>5</sup> These new approaches take into account not only published novels originally written in Spanish, but, crucially, they also consider translations and adaptations, unpublished works (many of which had failed to obtain publishing licences), as well as narratives in periodicals, miscellaneous collections and chapbooks (*pliegos de cordel*). They also incorporate extra-literary evidence, such as contemporary perceptions of the popularity of the genre, literary polemics regarding the novel's status and expressions of concern on the part of religious and civil authorities regarding the moral and political implications of reading novels. From this perspective, it has been shown that novels were published and read in eighteenth-century Spain: if the genre experienced a more troubled development than elsewhere in Europe, this only serves to indicate that resistance to novelty was stronger in Spain, and the weight of tradition heavier.<sup>6</sup>

Although the demand for novels did not disappear in the eighteenth century, the market was largely met, at least in the first half of that century, by re-editions of golden-age classics. New titles did not begin to appear until the 1760s and these remained highly dependant on seventeenth-century models. It was only in the 1780s that more innovative models came onto the market, initially in the form of translations of foreign works.<sup>7</sup> In this essay, I shall situate the second 'rise' of the novel in eighteenth-century Spain in its social, political and cultural context, drawing not only on recent revisions of the history of the novel, but also on work on the construction of gender roles and models of domesticity and sensibility. I shall focus in particular on the resurgence of the genre in the last two decades of the century and show how moral debate took a new direction when it became centred on the sentimental novel. I shall also investigate how this debate was both politicised and gendered, and consider its implications for the history of women's reading and writing.

5. Although Ian Watt's *The Rise of the novel* has never been translated into Spanish, his arguments have been incorporated into analyses of novel production and reading in eighteenth-century Spain. See, for instance, Alvarez Barrientos, *La Novela del siglo XVIII*; Philip Deacon, 'La novela inglesa en la España del siglo XVIII: fortuna y adversidades', *Actas del I Congreso internacional sobre novela del siglo XVIII*, ed. Fernando García Lara (Almería, 1998), p.126-39. On the subject of translation in eighteenth-century Spain see also *La Traducción en España (1750-1830): lengua, literatura, cultura*, ed. Francisco Lafarga (Leida, 1999).

6. Alvarez Barrientos, *La Novela del siglo XVIII*, p.401.

7. There are no systematic statistics or complete bibliographies of the novel in eighteenth-century Spain. Alvarez Barrientos, *La Novela del siglo XVIII*, however, provides a comprehensive account of original texts and adaptations. For translations of British novels, see Deacon, 'La novela inglesa'. It is also helpful to consult Francisco Aguilar Piñal, *Bibliografía de autores españoles del siglo XVIII* (Madrid, 1981-2000).

i. Cultural nationalism and the novel in Spain

While there is evidence to show that novels were printed and read throughout the eighteenth century, it was in the last decades of the century that the genre really gained in popularity.<sup>8</sup> Many contemporaries commented – often in derogatory terms – on the novel's immense success. One censor observed in 1798: 'de algunos años a esta parte se va resucitando en España por desgracia el gusto de las novelas.'<sup>9</sup> The literary critic, Cándido María Trigueros, noted scornfully in 1804 that 'sólo por furor puede haber tantos que las compran, y sólo porque las compran muchos, pueden ser muchos los que las publican.'<sup>10</sup> This success generated strong resistance from cultural and political authorities: Church officials, moralists, literary critics and those bodies charged with censoring politically subversive, unorthodox and immoral printed material. Such institutions included the Council of Castile and the Inquisition, whose hostility towards novels – from the Italian Renaissance novella to French Enlightenment fiction – justifies its reputation, as Domergue has put it, as 'une ogresse dévoreuse de romans'.<sup>11</sup>

The arguments levelled against the novel were not new, but drew upon traditional moral and aesthetic objections, recharged by the contemporary cultural and political context. Neoclassical aesthetics, with its defence of a set of fixed codes of beauty and literary propriety, regarded the genre as formless and marginal to classical literary theory.<sup>12</sup> Eighteenth-century moralism – enlightened as well as conservative – maintained, and to some extent strengthened, the traditional mistrust of the novel, associating the genre with moral corruption. As B. W. Ife and François López have shown in their studies on golden-age Spain, critics feared that absorption into the world of fiction, intensified by the practice

8. These included novels by Jean François Marmontel, Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, Stéphanie Ducrest, comtesse de Genlis, Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont, Marie Cottin, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Charlotte Lennox, Agnes Bennet, Elizabeth Helme and Sophie Lee. See Barrientos, *La Novela del siglo XVIII*, p.155-360; Deacon, 'La novela inglesa'; Alvarez Barrientos, 'Traducción y novela en la España del siglo XVIII: una aproximación', and María Jesús García Garrosa, 'Mujeres novelistas españolas en el siglo XVIII', both in *Actas del I Congreso internacional sobre novela del siglo XVIII*, ed. F. G. Lara, (Almería, 1998) p.11-21 and 165-77 respectively.

9. 'Sadly, in the last years the taste for novels is starting to revive in Spain', Domergue, 'Ilustración y novela en la España de Carlos IV', p.497.

10. 'Only madness can make so many people buy novels, and it is only because so many buy these novels that so many can publish them', Alvarez Barrientos, *La Novela del siglo XVIII*, p.199.

11. Domergue, *La Censure de livres en Espagne*, p.225. About 500 French books were proscribed by the Spanish Inquisition between 1747 and 1807, 150 of which are classed by Marcelin Defourneaux under the heading of 'Novelistic, gallant and erotic literature': *Inquisición y censura de libros en la España del siglo XVIII* (Madrid, 1973), p.247-56.

12. Domergue, 'Ilustración y novela en la España de Carlos IV', p.484.



of individual silent reading, would render readers unable to perform their proper role in society.<sup>13</sup>

Criticism of the genre also, however, acquired a new component, that of political fear. This was intensified in the 1790s when the ongoing confrontation between reformers and their conservative adversaries combined with the effects of the French Revolution to produce a strong ideological and political reaction. In the context of increasing ideological hostility with revolutionary France and of internal control and repression, novels were now seen as subverting political authority and religious orthodoxy. In particular, they were accused of disseminating the poisonous seeds of theism by omitting explicit references to revealed religion, and of undermining paternal authority, a crucial pillar of the social order and symbol of the king's authority within an absolutist monarchy.<sup>14</sup> The increased severity of censorship of both Spanish and foreign novels in the 1790s culminated in their official proscription on 27 May 1799, although the effects of this ban were not as far-reaching as had been intended.

Cultural nationalism created another powerful argument against the novel, which was regarded as a foreign import, alien to Spain's manners and literary tradition. This apparent paradox – considering that many European contemporaries attributed a Spanish origin to the genre – reveals the prominent position occupied by translations, adaptations and imitations of French and British novels, especially in late-eighteenth-century Spain, where the sentimental novel was referred to as the 'English novel'.

The explicit reasons for rejecting the novel on nationalistic grounds were both literary (fear that the Spanish language would be corrupted by poor translations) and moral (novels were seen to be incompatible with national codes of propriety). But the issue acquired further resonance in a country whose relationship with the rest of Europe had become particularly problematic. While Spanish conservatives pointed to foreign influences as the source of all evil, the patriotic discourse of enlightened reformers combined an admiration for the economic success and cultural hegemony of England, Holland and France with a defence of certain Spanish traditions. But the novel was not one to which the reformers gave their support: the immense and continuing popularity throughout the eighteenth century of seventeenth-century picaresque novels and short narratives, such as Cervantes and María de Zayas' *Novelas ejemplares*,

13. Ife, *Reading and fiction in golden-age Spain* (Spanish translation, Barcelona 1991); François López, 'Las malas lecturas: apuntes para una historia de lo novelesco', *Bulletin hispanique* 100:2 (1998), p.475-514.

14. One of the best-known examples is that of Pedro de Montengón's *Eusebio* (1786-1788). Inspired by Rousseau's *Emile* and an immense success, *Eusebio* was proscribed by the Inquisition in 1798 for its 'impious and scandalous propositions' and corrupt morals. The author was forced to produce a modified version, known as the 'second *Eusebio*' to meet the censor's requirements.

contrasted with the disapproval of such texts by Enlightenment critics who scorned their Baroque style and their open, playful or crude treatment of amorous and sexual matters. In particular, they despised de Zayas' narratives, presenting them as 'escandalosas' (scandalous), 'escritas sin gusto ni delicadeza, y en que las pasiones se ven pintadas con colores tan vivos, que apenas pueden leerse sin que se ofenda el pudor'.<sup>15</sup> Since this indigenous narrative tradition was no longer considered morally acceptable, the identification of the novel with foreign and improper manners, morals and literary conventions remained a serious obstacle for the development of the genre.

## ii. Spain and the 'English' sentimental novel

As was indeed the case elsewhere in Europe, moral issues, frequently perceived in patriotic terms, were thus at the heart of the literary and ideological debate on the novel in eighteenth-century Spain. They formed the basis of most of the censors' decisions and therefore shaped the discourse of authors and translators who claimed to respect Catholic morality. For example, the title of the Spanish version of Richardson's *Pamela* – translated, as was frequently the case, from the French version – emphasised that the text had been 'corregida y acomodada a nuestras costumbres'.<sup>16</sup> The translator, Ignacio García Malo, defended his decision to bring this novel to the Spanish public in spite of some dubious propositions 'que sonarían mal en nuestra lengua'<sup>17</sup> and a too detailed description of Mr. B's 'lubricity', by emphasising the moral value of Richardson's novel: 'su lectura redundará en bien común.'<sup>18</sup>

It was in terms of alleged moral rather than literary qualities that the genre slowly acquired greater legitimacy.<sup>19</sup> Central to this process was the acceptance of the moral utility of imaginative literature and this debate gradually became centred on the sentimental novel. On the one hand, there were those who mistrusted the imagination and condemned virtually all forms of fiction for dangerously invoking the passions, even if

15. 'lacking any taste or delicacy, in which passions are painted in colours so crude, that they can hardly be read without pudeur', José Clavijo y Fajardo, *El Pensador*, 6 vols (Madrid, Joaquín Ibarra, 1762-1767), vol.2, *pensamiento* (essay) XVIII, p.140. See also *Semanario erudito y curioso de Salamanca* (Salamanca, imprenta de Doña María Josefa Rico Villora y Manuel Rodríguez, 1793-1798) 202 (4 July 1795). On María de Zayas' reputation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Marina S. Brownlee, *The Cultural labyrinth of María de Zayas* (Philadelphia, PA, 2000), p.6-7, 18-19.

16. 'corrected and adapted to our manners'. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela Andrews o la virtud recompensada: traducida al castellano, corregida y acomodada a nuestras costumbres por el traductor*, translated by Ignacio García Malo (Madrid, Imprenta Real, 1794-1795).

17. 'that would not read well in our language'.

18. 'Reading it will produce the common good.'

19. Alberto Lista, for example, reluctantly admitted in 1822 that the novel was important in moral terms, if irrelevant by literary standards. See Alvarez Barrientos, *La Novela del siglo XVIII*, p.358.

allegedly seeking to show the final triumph of virtue. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, chivalric romances had been charged with corrupting the innocence of the reader – particularly the female reader – by awakening desire.<sup>20</sup> In the late eighteenth century, this traditional criticism was reformulated to make it applicable to the fashionable ‘English’ novel, associated above all with Richardson. Notwithstanding the moral intentions of those who wrote or adapted such literature, many critics feared either deliberate or innocent misreadings. As Cándido María Trigueros proclaimed in 1804:

Para una sola persona que se corrija por la lectura de tales escritos, si es posible que por ellos se corrija alguno, serán a lo menos mil los que se corrompan o empeoren; tal es la fragilidad del corazón humano. Muéstrennos un solo ejemplo de enmienda originada de la lectura de *Pamela*, que es quizá la mejor doncella que jamás se ha pintado; y será fácil observar muchos de corrupción entre la turbamulta de las señoritas que devoran con ansia la lectura de *Lovelace*.<sup>21</sup>

Such critics held that moral instruction was best accomplished in sermon-like style, explicitly guiding the readers’ acts and choices – a view that paved the way for the great success of many translations of didactic narratives like those of Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont and Stéphanie Ducrest, comtesse de Genlis, both of whom became very popular in Spain.<sup>22</sup> Although de Beaumont admired Richardson (whose immense success she had witnessed during her residence in Britain), she did not approve of his explicit depictions of passions. It was in this spirit that she wrote *La Nouvelle Clarice, histoire véritable* (1767), whose heroine embodies the prescriptive notions of domesticity, sentimentality and philanthropy, having as a counterpart not a libertine, but a responsible and tender fiancé who would become her husband. The Spanish version (*La Nueva Clarisa, historia verdadera*, 1797) drew 133 subscribers, a considerable

20. The mistrust of women’s relation to fiction is, for example, articulated in Joan Lluís Vives’ *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana*, Fray Luis de León’s *La Perfecta Casada* and Fénelon’s *L’Education des filles*, three works still very influential in eighteenth-century Spain.

21. ‘For every one person who will be reformed by reading these fictions, provided that is possible, at least a thousand people will be corrupted; so great is the fragility of the human heart. Show us one example of correction that originates from the reading of Pamela, who is possibly the most virtuous maiden ever described, and we shall easily observe many examples of corruption among the multitude of young ladies who anxiously devour Lovelace’s adventures’, Cándido M. Trigueros, *Pasatiempos* (1804), quoted in Alvarez Barrientos, *La Novela del siglo XVIII*, p.339.

22. Up to ten of Mme Le Prince de Beaumont’s and twenty of Mme de Genlis’s works were translated into Spanish in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, among them *La Nouvelle Clarice* (*La Nueva Clarisa*, Madrid, 1797), *Lettres de Madame de Montier* (*Cartas de Madama de Montier*, Madrid, 1796-1798; 2nd Spanish edition 1798), *Mémoires de la marquise de Bateville* (*Memorias de la marquesa de Bateville*, Malaga, 1795), *Adèle et Théodore* (*Adela y Teodoro*, Madrid, 1785; 2nd Spanish edition 1792), *Adélaïde* (*Adelaida*, Madrid, 1801) and *Les Veillées du château* (*Las Veladas de la Quinta*, Madrid, 1791). See Mónica Bolufer, ‘Pedagogía y moral en el siglo de las Luces: las escritoras francesas y su recepción en España’, *Revista de historia moderna* 20 (2002), p.251-91.

number by Spanish standards. The inclination for explicit moralising also shaped, well into the 1780s, many of the attempts to write original novels, resulting in verbose and didactic narratives, such as Pedro de Montengón's *El Eusebio* (1786-88) and *La Eudoxia* (1792).

On the other hand, however, there was a growing appreciation of the moral effects of the sentimental novel, which sought to gain the reader's heart by emotion and promote mechanisms of identification and imitation. In such literature, overt moralising was replaced with a more subtle moral and sentimental instillation, keeping the illusion of emotional spontaneity and moral choice. As Roger Chartier and Robert Darnton have argued, looking more specifically at French readers and the impact above all of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, such fiction helped construct a new type of sentimental subjectivity and a practice of intimate reading which, according to Chartier, can be seen (more than the generalisation of extensive versus intensive reading) as the true 'reading revolution' of the late eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Alongside Rousseau (whose works were proscribed by the Inquisition but avidly read by Spanish elites), Richardson was held up as the master of this type of novelistic fiction.<sup>24</sup> This was a position that was increasingly adopted by Spanish authors who, in the 1780s and 1790s, began both to translate and adapt foreign novels of this sort, and also to write original fiction, explicitly claiming to follow a European tradition of sentimental writing.<sup>25</sup> For instance, Ignacio García Malo, the translator of *Pamela*, prefaced his own collection of short sentimental stories, *Voz de la naturaleza* (1787) with the observation: 'No he sido yo el inventor de este modo de escribir; otros me han precedido con fruto.'<sup>26</sup>

Sentimental fiction did not only change the direction of the history of the novel in eighteenth-century Spain, recent studies have shown how it also responded and further contributed here, as elsewhere, to the development of new patterns of domesticity and gender relations, particularly

23. Roger Chartier, 'Revolución de la novela y revolución de la lectura', in *Entre poder y placer, cultura escrita y literatura en la Edad moderna* (Madrid, 2000), p.179-98 (184); Robert Darnton, 'Los lectores le responden a Rousseau: la creación de la sensibilidad moderna', in *La gran matanza de gatos y otros episodios de la vida cultural francesa* (Mexico, 1987), p.216-55.

24. The *Gaceta de Madrid*, 14 and 17 November 1795 (p.200) voiced the opinions of many readers when it praised *Clarissa* as possibly the best novel in history, comparable to *Don Quixote*.

25. All Rousseau's works were proscribed by the Inquisition in 1756 and were therefore never translated; however, the fact that many of them were read, including *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and, particularly, *Emile*, is widely documented among the Spanish elites, and brief excerpts (omitting their author's name) were sometimes published in periodicals or incorporated as unacknowledged citations in original Spanish works. Three of Richardson's novels were translated: *Pamela Andrews* (Madrid, 1794-1795, 2nd edition 1799), *Clara Harlowe* (Madrid, 1794-1798) and *Historia del caballero Carlos Grandisson* (Madrid, 1798).

26. 'I did not invent this style of writing; others have preceded me with utility', Ignacio García Malo, *Voz de la naturaleza: memorias o anécdotas curiosas e instructivas*, 2nd edn (Barcelona, Antonio Sastre, 1799, 'Advertencia al lector').

among the educated elites.<sup>27</sup> The topics of love, marriage and choice of partner – very common themes in both sentimental fiction and prescriptive literature – exemplify the very different approaches to moral instruction adopted in more traditional types of writing on the one hand and in the ‘new’ novel on the other. Conduct books and didactic fiction frequently broached the social importance of marriage and laid down detailed rules for marrying into one’s own economic sphere, following paternal advice (which in 1776 became a legal obligation), while at the same time choosing a spouse with impeccable social, moral and sentimental virtues.<sup>28</sup> In the novel, however, more was left to the sentimental education of the characters, whose choices were ostensibly not dictated by family and social conventions, but by the ‘free’ impulse of love. This was, for example, the approach developed in novels like Francisco de Tójar’s *La Filósofa por amor* (1799) and José Mor de Fuentes’ *El cariño perfecto, o Alonso y Serafina* (1798), where the protagonists are presented as a product of morally formative reading. Serafina is described through her lover’s eyes as the epitome of female sensibility and virtue, the result, in a typical eighteenth-century paradox, of both ‘natural’ inclinations – ‘todo en ella es obra intacta de la misma naturaleza’ – and meticulous education.<sup>29</sup> As Alfonso exclaims in one of his letters: ‘Se ha criado con finura, ha leído algunos libros.’<sup>30</sup> Although he does not specify the type of reading Serafina has modelled herself on, the recurrent defence of the positive moral effects of novels throughout the story, including praise of ‘la *Clarisa* y sus semejantes, que están brotando por todos sus renglones la moral más acendrada’ sent readers a very clear message.<sup>31</sup> As a result of this subtle exercise of coercion, paternal authority does not need to be explicitly exerted; free to choose among the men aspiring to her hand, the heroine could not even think of taking a husband of whom her parents might not approve.

These novels, like their French or British counterparts, focused in most cases on female protagonists. To Mor de Fuentes’ *Serafina* can be added, for example, Antonio de Valladares’ *La Leandra* (1797-1807) and Fran-

27. Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and domestic fiction* (Oxford, 1987); George Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of sensibility: sex and society in eighteenth-century Britain* (Chicago and London, 1992); Isabel Morant and Mónica Bolufer, *Amor, matrimonio y familia: la construcción histórica de la familia moderna* (Madrid, 1998).

28. See, for example, Josefa Amar, *Discurso sobre la educación física y moral de las mujeres* (Madrid, 1994 [1790]), ch.13, p.229-33.

29. ‘she is the untouched work of nature itself’. For a more detailed analysis, see Morant and Bolufer, *Amor, matrimonio y familia*, ch.5; also Alvarez Barrientos, ‘El modelo femenino en la novela española del siglo XVIII’, *Hispanic review* 63 (1995), p.1-18, which, however, seems to take at face value the discourse of free feeling and its apology of femininity.

30. ‘She has been appropriately raised; she has read some books’, José Mor de Fuentes, *El Cariño perfecto, o Alonso y Serafina*, 2 vols (Madrid, 1807), vol.2, p.51. No copies of the first edition have been found; there were two subsequent editions in 1802 and 1807.

31. ‘*Clarissa* and its likes, all whose lines distil the purest morals’, Mor de Fuentes, *La Serafina*, vol.1, p.100.

cisco de Tójar's *La Filósofa por amor* (1799, an adaptation of a French novel, *La philosophe par amour*, 1765). Each of these embodies a new type of self-conscious and sentimental subjectivity, new values – the apparent triumph of 'virtue' and 'merit' over birth and fortune; tenderness and consideration to temper paternal and conjugal authority – and new gender identities: a new ideal of femininity that was sentimental, yet reasonable and above all domestic, and of masculinity that was sober, contained, civilised. These models, made still more attractive by their identification with 'modern' and 'European' literary patterns, contributed to the new prestige which became gradually associated by the end of the century with the public exhibition of sensibility and of domestic order and happiness.

In some cases, even politicians espoused the sentimental novel as an instrument to inspire individual and civic virtue. In general, enlightened reformers directed their energies towards the reform of the stage, considering public performance to have a wider social outreach and to be also less prone to misinterpretation than private reading. The writer and magistrate Gaspar Melchor Jovellanos, however, who defended drama as a means of public instruction in Enlightenment values and morals and wrote the first Spanish sentimental drama in 1796, also affirmed the complementary nature of drama and the novel for the purposes of moral formation, echoing the opening words of Rousseau's preface to *La Nouvelle Héloïse*: 'los pueblos corrompidos necesitan novelas, como las ciudades populosas necesitan teatros.'<sup>32</sup> Like many contemporaries, however, it was Richardson whom he regarded as exemplifying the literary and virtuous novel, although even he advocated adaptations rather than faithful translations of the English master in order to purge his texts of any dangerous morals.

### iii. The expansion of the reading public and the position of women in the development of the novel in Spain

The debate regarding the novel in eighteenth-century Spain was not only shaped by the ideological; it was also informed by the European-wide expansion and transformation of print culture and the reading public, although relative to other European countries such changes in Spain were more limited and did not accelerate until the second half of the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, at this point literacy levels started to recover from their seventeenth-century decline, the presses increased their activity, printed material diversified, showing a slight decrease in the still overwhelming dominance of religious material, smaller book formats began to

32. 'corrupted people need novels, and populous cities need theatres', Gaspar Melchor Jovellanos, 'Censura sobre varias obras literarias', in *Obras publicadas e inéditas*, 5 vols. (Madrid, 1951-1956), vol. 2, p.535-36.

dominate the market, systems of subscriptions were initiated and the periodical press started to develop.<sup>33</sup> Regulating the social and moral uses of reading in the context of this ever-expanding availability of printed material thus became an even greater source of concern for moralists, educators and reformers, who devoted much effort to advising particularly the young and their parents how to trace safe paths through the confusing mass of printed words.

This need was posed in particularly urgent terms for women, thought to be especially susceptible to the benefits of instructional reading and the dangers of immoral literature. The urge to educate women to fulfil their domestic and social roles – newly defined in the eighteenth century, as noted above – was used to justify increasing amounts of pedagogic literature to train them as efficient mothers and wives, rational housekeepers, articulate but discreet conversationalists and social hostesses.<sup>34</sup> These arguments were also used by novelists and translators to authorise their work and attract an audience by promising readers they would find the same type of moral and practical instruction, dressed in a more entertaining guise and through the new language of sentimentality. At the same time authors sought the complicity and approval of potential women readers, identifying them as a distinct group that would influence the literary market. Although it is difficult to assess the actual position of women in the reading public in quantitative terms, they undoubtedly formed a significant group among subscribers to the periodical press and to both the didactic and the sentimental novel.<sup>35</sup> Collections explicitly addressing a female public, like the *Biblioteca entretenida de damas* (1798) and the *Biblioteca selecta de las damas* (1806-1807) were mainly composed of short sentimental stories. The publication of letters – either genuine or fabricated – further contributed to establish a firm relationship between the novel and women readers.

As explained above, the moral debates regarding the novel in Spain and the sentimental novel in particular polarised critics. While increasingly this type of fiction was considered to have potentially beneficial effects, many continued to believe such novels to be a corrupting influence. Given the perception of the growing importance of women among the reading public and hence the jostling between moralists, novelists and

33. See Antonio Viñao Frago, 'Alfabetización e Ilustración: difusión y usos de la cultura escrita', in *La Educación en la Ilustración española, Revista de Educación*, número extraordinario (1988), p.275-302, Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos, François López and Inmaculada Urzainqui, *La República de las letras en el siglo XVIII* (Madrid, 1995); *Historia literaria de España en el siglo XVIII*, ed. Francisco Aguilar Piñal (Madrid, 1996).

34. Mónica Bolufer, *Mujeres e Ilustración. La construcción de la feminidad en la España del siglo XVIII* (Valencia 1998), ch.6.

35. The percentage of women subscribing to translations of the sentimental or didactic novel ranged from 14% to 27%: Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* (1794-1795) had 14%; Fielding's *Historia de Amelia Booth* (1795) had 18%; Mme de Genlis's *Adela y Teodoro* (1785) had 16.6%; and Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's *La Nueva Clarisa* (1797) had 27%.

publishers to control their reading, these debates frequently assumed an explicitly gendered form. Thus, the translation of *Clarissa Harlowe* was celebrated by the editors of the *Gaceta de Madrid* in 1794 as 'la obra más propia y útil para el bello sexo, como que se ha escrito principalmente para él y debe con justicia llamarse la obra de las mujeres'.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, deviant readings of the sentimental novel were not ruled out even by those who otherwise defended the moral power of fiction or wrote novels themselves, like José Mor de Fuentes, whose admiration for Richardson did not prevent him from including in his novel *Serafina* the character of a sceptical female reader, annoyed rather than moved by *Clarissa*, in spite of the efforts of the male protagonist to persuade her of its moral and literary beauties.<sup>37</sup>

The figure of the female reader often functioned in Spain, as elsewhere, as 'a metonym for the newly reconstituted reader'.<sup>38</sup> That is to say, appealing to the 'ladies' or pretending to write for them was, in many cases, a strategy to address more widely an audience of both genders which included not only the elites but also the middle classes. The 'frivolous' female reader was usually represented as a reader of novels, identified with the stereotype of the leisured aristocratic or wealthy lady who gives herself equally to the excesses of luxury and of foreign fashions and fictions. This figure was used in periodicals, pedagogical tracts and censorship reports in opposition to that of the 'virtuous' female reader of pious books or conduct literature. These two moral stereotypes represented social practices, attitudes and values that were either discouraged or encouraged: reading for pleasure or to acquire fashionable knowledge of the world on the one hand, and instructional reading on the other; reading in a context of polite, 'superficial' sociability or in dangerous solitude, leaving the subject prone to sensual abandonment, as opposed to reading in the respectable setting of one's own domestic circle or under the qualified guidance of a tutor, as represented in many didactic fictions (like Mme de Genlis's *Les Veillées du château* and its Spanish imitators);<sup>39</sup> the dangers of the libertine or erotic novel and of the 'foreign' (implicitly English or French) novel, and the benefits of instructive fiction adapted to Spanish manners and morals. The fact that

36. 'the most appropriate and useful work for the *beau sexe*, which has been written mainly for them and can, in all justice, be considered the women's novel', *Gaceta de Madrid* 92 (18 November 1794), p.1373.

37. Mor de Fuentes, *La Serafina*, vol.2, p.100 and 57.

38. Kathryn Shevelov, *Women and print culture: the construction of femininity in the early periodical* (London and New York, 1989), p.23. On the construction of the woman reader see Catherine Jaffe, 'Writing the woman reader in eighteenth-century Spain', *Dieciocho* 22:1 (1999), p.35-59; Bolufer, *Mujeres e Ilustración*, p.300-309 and 'Espectadores y lectoras: representación e influencia del público femenino en la prensa del siglo XVIII', *Cuadernos de estudios del siglo XVIII* 5 (1995), p.23-57.

39. Such as Vicente Rodríguez de Arellano's *Las Tardes de la granja* (1803) and Antonio Valladares y Sotomayor's *Tertulias de invierno en Chinchón* (1815-1820).



the two figures could be used in different hands to praise and condemn the same text, however, as seen in the divergent reactions provoked by Richardson's *Clarissa*, reveals the still unstable status of the novel in Spain at the end of the century and the particular problems it posed for women in terms of morality and respectability.

In fact, the ambivalent position of women with regard to the novel in eighteenth-century Spain poses an interesting paradox. While women were perceived and courted by writers and publishers as a 'natural' public for novels, female writers very rarely cultivated the genre before the nineteenth century. Indeed, they often made a point of distancing themselves from it and of encouraging other women to do the same. Undoubtedly they were influenced by the general mistrust of the novel, and especially of sentimental fiction. The fragility of their role as women of letters obliged them to present an impeccable public image of social and moral respectability to authorise their writing and publishing. Thus, the negative discourse about the moral dangers of the novel, or in the best case its frivolity and literary irrelevance, shaped the aspirations of women writers who generally kept their literary activity on the safer grounds of more respectable genres like poetry, neoclassical drama or moral comedy, educational tracts, religious works and reformist essays. Furthermore, given that novel writing elsewhere in Europe was generally a commercial enterprise, the genre did not sit well with the conditions of women's participation in the republic of letters in Spain where female professional authorship was virtually non-existent and, although women writers of the middle class were beginning to emerge, the model of the respectable 'authoress' was still strongly marked by elitism.<sup>40</sup>

The fact that in France and particularly in Britain women played a prominent role in novel-writing was not ignored in Spain, where some of their works were translated and their activity and success noticed by Spanish travellers, like Juan Andrés in his *Origen, progresos y estado actual de toda la literatura* (1787) or the Duke of Almodóvar in his *Décadas literarias de París* (1781). Unlike the French or British cases, however, among the roughly 200 Spanish women documented as having written some kind of literary work in the eighteenth century, only eight were associated with the novelistic genre. Virtually all of them translated foreign (mostly French) works. Added to the general significance of translation in the eighteenth century as an easy and quick response to changes in demand, and a way for translators and readers to feel participants in a community which shared similar tastes and values – those of 'cosmopolitanism' and

40. On the conditions for women's writing in eighteenth-century Spain, see Bolufer, *Mujeres e Ilustración*, p.309-39; Bolufer, 'Representaciones y prácticas de vida: las mujeres en la España del siglo XVIII', *Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo* 11 (2003), p.30-34, and María Victoria López-Cordón, 'La fortuna de escribir: escritoras de los siglos XVII y XVIII', in *Historia de las mujeres en España y América Latina*, ed. Isabel Morant, 4 vols (Madrid, 2005-2006), vol.2, pp. 193-234.

'modernity' figuring prominently among them – translating had a particular meaning for women. It allowed them to enter the public world of publishing in a discreet and 'modest' way, by speaking through the voice of others, and at the same time left them considerable space for expressing their own views through the choice of text, its adaptation and annotation, and sometimes through the addition of some original material.<sup>41</sup>

A particularly interesting example is that of Inés Joyes y Blake, a woman of Irish descent, who translated Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* in 1798, appending to it a long original essay, *Apología de las mujeres*, presented as a *Carta de la traductora a sus hijas*, a particularly vibrant and lucid analysis and denouncement of the condition of women in eighteenth-century Spain.<sup>42</sup> In most cases, women chose to translate didactic narratives that were unlikely to meet opposition among censors, such as Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, Michel-Ange Marin's *Virginie* (translated by Cayetana Aguirre in 1806) or works by Mme Le Prince de Beaumont and Mme de Genlis.<sup>43</sup> Only exceptionally did they take risks with a novel whose enlightened social critique might raise objections, like Françoise de Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, translated in 1792 by María Rosario Romero, who carefully revised and rewrote some passages touching on the Spanish colonial activity in America, and added a supplementary letter describing the heroine's conversion to Catholicism,<sup>44</sup> and Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's *Les Américaines*, whose Spanish version by Cayetana de la Cerda y Vera, countess of Lalaing, was denied a publishing licence.<sup>45</sup>

41. On women translators in eighteenth-century Spain, see María Victoria López-Cordón, 'Traducción y traductoras en la España de finales del siglo XVIII', in *Entre la marginación y el desarrollo: mujeres y hombres en la Historia*, ed. Gloria Niella and Cristina Segura (Madrid, 1996), p.89-112, and Bolufer, 'Traducción y creación en la actividad intelectual de las ilustradas españolas: el ejemplo de Inés Joyes y Blake', in *Frasquita Larrea y Aherán: Europeas y españolas entre la Ilustración y el Romanticismo*, ed. Gloria Espigado and María José de la Pascua (Cádiz, 2003), p.137-55.

42. On Joyes' translation and *Apología*, see Bolufer, 'Traducción y creación'.

43. Samuel Johnson, *El Príncipe de Abisinia*, translated by Inés Joyes y Blake (Madrid, 1798); Michel-Ange Marin, *Virginia, la doncella cristiana*, translated by Cayetana de Aguirre (Madrid, 1806); Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont, *Cartas de Mme de Montier a su hija*, translated by María Antonia Río y Arnedo (Madrid, 1796-1798); Stéphanie de Genlis, *Adelaida o el Triunfo del amor*, translated by María Jacoba Castilla y Xarava (Madrid, 1801). The only original novel written by a woman, Clara Jara de Soto's *El Instruido en la Corte y aventuras del extremeño* (1789), follows the traditional patterns of Baroque satirical fiction.

44. Françoise de Graffigny, *Cartas de una Peruana*, translated by María Rosario Romero Masegosa y Cancelada (Valladolid, 1792). On this version, see Theresa Ann Smith, 'Writing out of the margins: women, translation, and the Spanish Enlightenment', *Journal of women's history* 15:1 (2003), p.116-43.

45. The censors feared that the rationalist questioning and demonstration of revealed truth in *Les Américaines* might stimulate incredulity, an accusation rejected by the translator, who passionately and intelligently defended the work's orthodoxy (see documents at the Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, *Consejos, expediente* 5556-35).

Women writers tended deliberately to distance themselves from the frivolous image of the female novel reader to set in greater relief their own serious, moral purposes. Josefá Amar y Borbón, a respected writer, defender of the cause of women and member of several reformist academies, detailed in her major work, *Discurso sobre la educación física y moral de las mujeres* (1790), a remarkable list of readings suitable for women, including Spanish, Latin and Greek classics, pedagogic and medical books, which explicitly excluded novels: 'La afición que muchas mujeres tienen a leer y la ignorancia de asuntos dignos hace que se entreguen con exceso a los romances, novelas y comedias, cuya lectura generalmente es mala por las intrigas y enredos que enseña.'<sup>46</sup> As a writer who cherished classical erudition and built herself a reputation as a solid scholar, Amar y Borbón's literary taste and ambitions clearly distanced her from novels. She embraced the traditional mistrust of the genre but with a significant twist: unlike conservative moralists, she did not wish to confine women to devotional and utilitarian reading, but invited them to exercise knowledge as a pleasure and a right. The countess of Montijo, likewise, stressed in her translation of a moral work on marriage by the French jansenist, Le Tourneux, her scorn for the light reading in fashion among ladies of her rank: 'Sin duda muchos juzgarán que debería entretenerme en leer comedias y novelas, y quizá no pocos aplaudirían que me hubiera dedicado a traducir algunas obras de Voltaire, para hacer amena y agradable mi conversación.'<sup>47</sup>

Those female writers who did translate novels went to great lengths to emphasise the irreproachable morality of their choices and to recommend their translations as particularly suitable and instructive reading for women. For example, María Rosario Romero, translator of Mme de Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, justified her choice of text by assuring her readers she had modified all dubious parts of it to meet even the most orthodox requirements.<sup>48</sup> She also included a short autobiographical narrative of her progress as a reader, discursively framed as a process of conversion from her early love for 'las novelas de María de Zayas y otras obras de ese jaez'<sup>49</sup> to her later development under male guidance (that of her brother) of a taste for morally instructive and literary reading. The distinction between 'improper' fiction, represented by the narratives of María de Zayas, and 'proper' novels, and between the 'bad' and the

46. 'The strong inclination many women have for reading and their ignorance of respectable subjects make them give themselves in excess to romances, novels and comedies, the reading of which is usually negative because of the intrigues they teach.'

47. 'Many would consider that I should entertain myself by reading comedies and novels, and maybe some would have approved, had I undertaken the translation of some works of Voltaire, to make my conversation more entertaining and pleasurable', Nicolas Le Tourneux, *Instrucciones cristianas sobre el sacramento del matrimonio*, translated by María Francisca de Sales Portocarrero, countess of Montijo (Barcelona, 1774), presentation.

48. Graffigny, *Cartas de una Peruana*, translator's preface.

49. 'María de Zayas' novels, and other readings of that sort'.

'good' reader were evidently used here to authorise the translator as a respectable woman writer. In her turn, María Jacoba Castilla dedicated to women her version of Mme de Genlis's *Adélaïde* (1801), and stressed its moral utility 'en un tiempo en que la virtud y el decoro están como fugitivos de nuestras concurrencias'.<sup>50</sup> By stating, then, in an even more emphatic tone the commonplace moral defence of the novel, the small number of women writers who did not avoid the genre in eighteenth-century Spain may have helped develop the notion that 'proper' novels were not only convenient reading for a respectable woman, but an acceptable genre for women to write or, at least, to translate, as long as they took the greatest care to choose impeccable texts and declared their aim to be the instruction of their sex.

In eighteenth-century Spain women thus helped shape the moral discourse on the novel and, more widely, on the act of reading. They achieved this as readers who were identified with a wider, modern public and who, for strategic purposes, were represented by writers and publishers as particularly needing new and more effective ways of moral and practical instruction in which the novel was given a prominent place. They achieved this also, by act and omission, as writers who, because of their gender, were either implicitly discouraged from venturing into a genre whose respectability was still strongly debated, or had to over-emphasise the moral purposes of their writing.

The 'rise of the novel' in sixteenth-century Spain did not come to a dead-end in the eighteenth century, as is often believed, at least not if the expression coined by Watt is taken to mean not only the emergence of national novelistic traditions, but a wider process connected to social transformations in family relations, structures of subjectivity, material conditions and forms of cultural consumption. After the slow fading of the Renaissance and Baroque models of the pastoral, chivalric or courtly romance and the picaresque narrative, the development of other types of fiction in eighteenth-century Spain (the sentimental, gothic or realist novel) came late in relation to other European countries and, in strictly literary terms, did not produce brilliant, original results, compared either with contemporary British and French fiction or with the sophistication and self-consciousness of golden-age Spanish literature. Such literature, however, was certainly significant as part of a socio-cultural process that involved new reading and publishing practices, a more intimate relationship between author and reader, and a modified appreciation of the moral and social significance of fiction.

The marginal position occupied by Spain in material and intellectual terms in relation to the rest of eighteenth-century Europe, especially in contrast with its hegemonic cultural and political role in the sixteenth and

50. 'in a time when virtue and decorum are absent from our meetings', Genlis, *Adelaida, o el Triunfo del amor*, translator's preface.

seventeenth centuries, provides us with a vantage point from which we can rethink the role played by reception and appropriation as key cultural practices. Throughout Europe, but particularly in peripheral territories, translation functioned as a way of adapting and manipulating texts and ideas, that is, a creative practice, which must be integrated into any analysis of cultural production. In eighteenth-century Spain, as elsewhere, the novel, in the form of translated or original texts, functioned not only as a sign, but also as an agent of socio-cultural transformation and, it could be argued, of the 'civilizing process', understood, in Norbert Elias' terms, as the internalisation of social conventions and coercions.<sup>51</sup> It was a genre traditionally perceived as dangerous, but newly credited in the eighteenth century with contributing to the reform of manners and morals. The social construction of modern domesticity and the sentimental subject, the modification of gender identities and roles, which lie at the root of modern society, would be impossible to understand in Spain, as in the rest of the western world and its colonial empires, without a history of the novel. In the case of Spain, however, the long coexistence of new with earlier types of fictional narrative, the persistence of debate about the literary and moral status of the novel throughout the eighteenth century, the tightening of governmental and inquisitorial control over the genre towards the 1790s, and the uneasy relation between women and the novel, as readers and particularly as writers, all indicate a process which was discontinuous, revealing the complexities and limits of the cultural and social modernisation of the country.

51. Norbert Elias, *El Proceso de civilización: investigaciones sociogenéticas y psicogenéticas* (Mexico, 1987).